

Jane Cable

...By...
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Author of "Beverly of Graustark," Etc.

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CHAPTER VIII.

BOBBOY RIGBY and Graydon Bansemmer were bosom friends in Chicago; they had been classmates at Yale. It had been a question of money with Bobby from the beginning. According to his own admission, his money was a source of great annoyance to him. He was not out of debt but once and then before he fully realized it. So unusual was the condition that he could not sleep. The first thing he did in the morning was to borrow right and left for fear another attack of insomnia might interfere with his training for the football eleven.

Robertson Ray Rigby, immortalized as Bobby, had gone in for athletics, where he learned to think and act quickly. He was called one of the lightest but headiest quarterbacks in the east. No gridiron idol ever escaped his "Jimmy" or "Tippy" or "Pop" or "Johnny." When finally he hung out his shingle in Chicago—Robertson R. Rigby, Attorney at Law—he lost his identity even among his classmates. It was weeks before the fact became generally known that it was Bobby who waited for clients behind the deceptive shingle.

The indulgent aunt who had supplied him with funds in college was rich in business blocks and apartment buildings, and now Mr. Robertson R. Rigby was her man of affairs. When he went in for business, the old push of the football field did not desert him. He was very much alive and very vigorous, and it did not take him long to "learn the signals."

With his aunt's unflinching prosperity, his own ready wit and unbridled versatility he was not long in establishing himself safely in his profession and in society. Everybody liked him, though no one took him seriously except when they came to transact business with him. Then the willingness of the drawing room turned into shrewdness as it crossed the office threshold.

The day after the Cable dinner Bobby yawned and stretched through his morning mail. He had slept but little the night before, and all on account of a certain, or rather uncertain, Miss Clegg. That petite and aggravating young woman had been especially exasperating at the Cable dinner. Mr. Rigby, superbly confident of his standing with her, encountered difficulties which put him very much out of temper. For the first time there was an apparent rift in her constancy. Never before had she shown such signs of fluctuating. He could not understand it. "In fact, he dared not understand it." She was a most annoying young person," said Mr. Rigby to himself wrathfully more than once after he went to bed that night. Anyhow, he could not see what there was about Howard Medford for any girl to countenance, much less to admire. Mr. Medford certainly had ruined the Cable dinner party for Mr. Rigby, and he was full of resentment.

"Miss Keating," called Mr. Rigby for the third time, "may I interrupt your conversation with Mr. Deever long enough to ask a question that has been on my mind for twenty minutes?"

Mr. Deever was the raw young gentleman who read law in the office of Judge Smith next door. Bobby maintained that if he read law at all it was at night, for he was too busy with other occupations during the day.

Miss Keating, startled, turned round almost promptly. "Yes, sir," at last came from the pert young woman near the window.

"I guess I'll be going," said Mr. Deever resentfully, rising slowly from the side of her desk on which he had been lounging.

"Wait a minute, Eddie," protested Miss Keating. "What's your hurry?" And then she almost snapped out, "What is it, Mr. Rigby?"

"I merely wanted to ask if you have sufficient time to let me dictate a few short letters that ought to go out to-day," said Bobby sarcastically. And then added with mock apology: "Don't move, Mr. Deever. If you're not in Miss Keating's way, you're certainly not in mine."

"A great josh!" that young woman was heard to comment admiringly. "You may wake up some morning to find that I'm not," said Bobby soberly. Whereupon Miss Keating rose and strode to the other end of the room and took her place beside Bobby's desk.

Bobby dictated half a dozen inconsequential letters before coming to the one which troubled him most. For many minutes he stared reflectively at the typewritten message from New York. Miss Keating frowned severely and tapped her little foot somewhat impatiently on the floor. But Bobby would not be hurried. His reflections were too serious. This letter from New York had come with a force sufficient to drive out even the indignant

thoughts concerning one Miss Clegg. For the life of him Bobby Rigby could not immediately frame a reply to the startling missive. Eddie Deever stirred restlessly on the window ledge.

"Don't hurry, Eddie!" called Miss Keating distinctly and indignantly. "Oh, I guess I'll be going," he called back, beginning to roll a cigarette. "I have some reading to do today." Mr. Deever was tall, awkward and homely and a lot of other things that would have discouraged a less self-satisfied "lady's man." Judge Smith said he was hopeless, but that he might do better after he was twenty-one.

"What are you reading now, Eddie?" asked Miss Keating, complacently eyeing Mr. Rigby. "Raffles?"

"Law, you idiot!" said Eddie scornfully, going out of the door.

"Oh! Well, the law is never in a hurry, don't you know? It's like justice—the slowest thing in town!" she called after him as his footsteps died away.

"Ready?" said Bobby, resolutely. "Take this, please." And slowly and carefully he proceeded to dictate: "Dear Denis—I cannot tell you how much your letter surprised me. What you say seems preposterous. There must be a mistake. It cannot be this man. I know him quite well, and he seems as straight as a string and a gentleman too. His son you know as well as I. There isn't a better fellow in the world. Mr. B. has a fairly good business here. His transactions open and aboveboard. I'm sure I have never heard a word said against him or his methods. You are mistaken; there's all there is about it."

You might investigate a little further and, assuring yourself, do all in your power to check such stories as you relate. Of course I'll do as you suggest, but I'm positive I can find nothing discreditable in his dealings here. Keep me posted on everything. As ever, yours,

Miss Keating's anxiety was aroused. After a very long silence she took the reins into her own hands. "Is Mr. Briggs in trouble?" she asked at a venture. Mr. Briggs was the only client she could think of whose name began with a B.

Briggs? What Briggs?" asked Bobby, relighting his pipe for the fourth time.

"Why, our Mr. Briggs," answered Miss Keating curtly.

"I'm sure I don't know, Miss Keating. Has he been around lately?"

"I thought you were referring to him in that letter," she said succinctly.

"Oh, dear me, no; another party altogether, Miss Keating. Isn't the type writer in working order this morning?" he asked, eying her machine innocently. She sniffed and started to reply, but thought better of it. Then she began pounding the keys briskly.

"It works like a charm," she shot back gleefully.

The letter that caused Bobby such perturbation came in the morning mail. His friend had laid bare some of the old stories concerning James Bansemmer and cautioned him not to become involved in transactions with the former New Yorker. Harbert's statements were positive in character, and he seemed to know his case thoroughly well. While the charges as they came to Rigby were general, Harbert had said that he was quite ready to be specific.

All day long the letter hung like a cloud over young Mr. Rigby. He was to have lunch with Graydon and was much relieved when young Bansemmer telephoned that he could not join him. Rigby found himself in a very uncomfortable position. If the stories from New York were true, even though he knew none of the inside facts, Graydon's father was pretty much of a scoundrel, to say the least. He was not well acquainted with the lawyer, but he now recalled that he never had liked the man. Bansemmer had impressed him from the beginning as heartless, designing, utterly unlike his clean hearted son.

Bobby loved Graydon Bansemmer in the way that one man loves a true friend. He was certain that the son knew nothing of those shady transactions—if they really existed as Harbert painted them—but an exposure of the father would be a blow from which he could not recover.

It came at last to Rigby that he was not the only one in Chicago who held the secret. Other members of the bar had been warned long before the news came to him, and it was morally certain that if the facts were as bad as intimated the police also were in possession of them.

At the same time Rigby felt a certain moral responsibility involving himself. Bansemmer at any time might apply his methods to people who were near and dear to him. The new intimacy with the Cables came to Bobby's mind. And then there were Clegg, Groll, the Samsons and others who might easily fall into the snare if James Bansemmer set it for them.

Appreciating his responsibility in the matter, now that he was prepared to hear the worst of James Bansemmer, Rigby's heart stood almost still. It meant that some day he might have to expose Graydon Bansemmer's father. It meant that he might have to crush his friend. It meant that he might lose a friendship that had been one of his best treasures since the good old college days. The mere fact that he would be compelled to watch

and contrast James Bansemmer seemed like darkest treachery to Graydon, even though the son should not become aware of the situation.

Later in the afternoon Bobby went guiltily into a telegraph office and sent away a carefully worded dispatch. The answer came to him at the club that evening while he was playing billiards with young Bansemmer, who even then was eager to be off to keep the promised appointment with pretty Miss Cable.

The telegram, which he opened while Graydon impatiently chalked his cue and waited for him to play, was brief and convincing. It read:

Watch him, by all means. He is not safe. My word for it. There is no mistake.



CHAPTER IX.

HE little room off the library was Jane's "den." Her father had a better name for it. He called it her "web," but only in secret conference. Graydon Bansemmer lounged there in blissful contemplation of a roseate fate, all the more enjoyable because his very ease was the counterpoise of doubt and uncertainty. No word of love had passed between the mistress of the web and her loyal victim. But eyes and blood had translated the mysterious, voiceless language of the heart into the simplest of sentences. They loved and they knew it.

After leaving Rigby at the club Graydon drove to the north side, strolled to the marrow with the prospect of the night. His heart was in that little room off the library—and had been there for months. It was the abode of his thoughts. The stars out above the cold, glittering lake danced merrily for him as he whirled up the Drive. The white carpet of February crinkled and creaked with the chill of the air, but his heart was hot and safe and sure. He knew that she knew what he was coming for that night—the first kiss!

Jane's face was warm; her eyes had the tender glow of joy expectant; her voice was soft with the promise of coming surrender. Their hands met and clasped as she stood to welcome him in the red, seductive dimness of the little throneroom. His tall frame quivered; his lean, powerful, young face betrayed the hunger of his heart; his voice turned husky. It was not as he had planned. Her beauty—her mere presence—sweep him past the preliminary fears and doubts. His handclasp tightened, and his face drew resistlessly to hers. Then their hands went suddenly cold.

"You know, don't you, Jane, darling?" he murmured.

"Yes," she answered after a moment softly, securely. He crushed her in his strong arms. All the world seemed to have closed in about her. Her eyes, suffused with happiness, looked sweetly into his until she closed them with the coming of the first kiss. "I love you—oh, I love you!" she whispered.

"I worship you, Jane!" he responded, "I have always worshipped you!"

It was all so natural, so normal. The love that had been silent from the first had spoken, that was all—had put into words its untold story.

"Jane, I am the proudest being in the world!" he said, neither knew how long afterward, for neither thought of time. They were sitting on the couch in the corner, their turbulent hearts at rest. "To think, after all, that such a beautiful being as you can be mine forever! It's—why, it's inconceivable!"

"You were sure of me all the time, Graydon," she remonstrated. "I tried to hide it, but I couldn't. You must have thought me a perfect fool all these months."

"You are very much mistaken, if you please. You did hide it so successfully at times that I was sick with uncertainty."

"Well, it's all over now," she smiled. And he sighed with a great relief.

"All over but the wedding," he said.

"Oh, that's a long way off. Let's not worry over that, Graydon."

"A long way off? Nonsense! I won't wait."

"Won't?"

"I should have said can't. Let's see. This is February. March, dearest?"

"Graydon, you are so much younger than I thought. A girl simply cannot be hurried through an engagement. Next winter."

"Next what? That's nearly a year. Jane, it's absurd! I'm ready."

"I know. It's mighty noble of you too. But I just can't, dearest. No one ever does."

"Don't—don't you think I'm prepared to take care of you?" he said, straightening up a bit.

She looked at his strong figure and into his earnest eyes and laughed so adorably that his resentment was only passing.

"I can't give you a home like this," he explained. "But you know I'll give you the best I have all my life."

"You can't help succeeding, Graydon," she said earnestly. "Every one says that of you. I'm not afraid. I'm not thinking of that. It isn't the home I care for. It's the home. You must let me choose the day."

"I suppose it's customary," he said at last. "June is the month for brides."

let me remind you."

"Before you came this evening I had decided on January next, but now I am willing to"—

"Oh, you decided before I came, eh?" laughingly.

"Certainly," she said unblushingly. "Just as you had decided on the early spring. But listen, dear. I am willing to say September of this year."

"One, two, three—seven months. They seem like years, Jane. You won't say June?"

"Please, please let me have some of the perquisites," she pleaded. "It hasn't seemed at all like a proposal. I've really been cheated of that, you must remember, dear. Let me say at least, as they all do, that I'll give you an answer in three days."

"Granted! I'll admit it wasn't the sort of proposal one reads about in novels!"

"But it was precisely as they are in real life, I'm sure. No one has a stereotyped proposal any more. The men always take it for granted and begin planning things before a girl can say no."

"Ah, I see it has happened to you," he said, jealous at once.

"Well, isn't that the way men do nowadays?" she demanded.

"A fellow has to feel reasonably sure, I dare say, before he takes a chance. No one wants to be refused, you know," he admitted. "Oh, by the way, I brought this—er—this ring up with me, Jane."

"You darling!" she cried as the ring slipped down over her finger. And then for the next hour they planned, and the future seemed a thousandfold brighter than the present, glorious as it was.

"You can't help succeeding," she repeated. "The same as your father has. Isn't he wonderful? Oh, Graydon, I'm so proud of you!" she cried enthusiastically.

"I can never be the man that the governor is," said Graydon loyally. "I couldn't be as big as father if I lived to be 120. He's the best ever! He's done everything for me, Jane," the son went on warmly. "Why, he even left dear old New York and came to Chicago for my sake, dear. It's the place for a young man, he says, and he gave up a great practice so that we might be here together. Of course he could succeed anywhere. Wasn't it bulky of him to come to Chicago just—just for me?"

"Yes, Oh, if you'll only be as good looking as he is when you are fifty-five!" she said so plaintively that he laughed aloud. "You'll probably be very fat and very bald by that time."

"And very healthy, if that can make it seem more horrible to you," he added.

"For some time he sat pondering while she stared reflectively into the fire opposite. Then, squaring his shoulders as if preparing for a trying task, he announced firmly: "I suppose I'd just as well see your father tonight, dearest. He likes me, I'm sure, and I—I don't think he'll refuse to let me have you. Do you?"

"My dad's just as fair as yours, Gray," she said, with a smile. "He's upstairs in his den. I'll go to mother. I know she'll be happy—oh, so happy!"

Bansemmer found David Cable in his room upstairs, his smoking and thinking room, as he called it.

"Come in, Graydon. Don't stop to knock. How are you? Cigarette? Take a cigar, then. Bad night outside, isn't it?"

"Is it? I hadn't—er—noticed," said Graydon, dropping into a chair and nervously nipping the end from a cigar. "Have you been downtown?"

"Yes. Just got in a few minutes ago. The road expects to do a lot of work west his year, and I've been talking with the ways and means gentlemen—a polite and parliamentary way to put it."

"I suppose we'll all be congratulating you after the annual election, Mr. Cable?"

"Oh, that's just talk, my boy. Wine-mann is the logical man for president. But where is Jane?"

"She's—ah—downstairs, I think," said the tall young man, puffing vigorously. "I came up—er—to see you about Jane, Mr. Cable. I have asked her to be my wife, sir."

For a full minute the keen eyes of the older man, sharpened by strife and experience, looked straight into the earnest gray eyes of the young man who now stood across the room with his hand on the mantelpiece. Cable's cigar was held poised in his fingers, half way to his lips. Graydon Bansemmer felt that the man aged a year in that brief moment.

"You know, Graydon, I love Jane myself," said Cable at last, arising slowly. His voice shook.

"I know, Mr. Cable. She is everything to you. And yet I have come to ask you to give her to me."

"It isn't that I have not suspected—aye, known—what the outcome would be," said the other mechanically. "She will marry, I know. It is right that she should. It is right that she should marry you, my boy. You—you do love her?" He asked the question almost fiercely.

"With all my soul, Mr. Cable. She loves me. I don't know how to convince you that my whole life will be given to her happiness. I am sure I can."

"I know. It's all right, my boy. It costs a good deal to let her go, but I'd rather give her to you than to any man I've ever known. I believe in you."

"Thank you, Mr. Cable," said Graydon Bansemmer. Two strong hands clasped each other, and there was no mistaking the integrity of the grasp.

"But this is a matter in which Jane's mother is far more deeply concerned than I," added the older man. "She likes you, my boy. I know that to be true, but we must both abide by her wishes. If she has got retired—"

known by this time."

"She is coming," Mrs. Cable's light footsteps were heard crossing the hall, and an instant later Bansemmer was holding open the door for her to enter. He had a fleeting glimpse of Jane as that tall young woman turned down the stairway.

Frances Cable's face was white and drawn, and her eyes were wet. Her husband started forward as she extended her hand to him. He clasped them in his own and looked down into her face with the deepest tenderness and wistfulness in his own. Her body swayed suddenly, and his expression changed to one of surprise and alarm.

"Don't—don't mind, dear," he said hoarsely. "It had to come. Sit down, do. There. Good Lord, Frances, if you cry now I'll—I'll go all to smash!"

He sat down abruptly on the arm of the big leather chair into which she had sunk limply. Something seemed to choke him, and his fingers went nervously to his collar. Before them stood the straight, strong figure of the man who was to have Jane forever.

Neither of them—nor Jane—knew what Frances Cable had suffered during the last hour. She accidentally had heard the words which passed between the lovers in the den downstairs. She was prepared when Jane came to her with the news later on, but that preparation had cost her more than any of them ever could know.

Lying back in a chair after she had almost crept to her room, she stared white faced and frightened at the ceiling until it became peopled with her wretched thoughts. All along she had seen what was coming. The end was inevitable. Love as it grew for them had known no regard for her misery. She could not have prevented its growth; she could not now frustrate its culmination, and yet as she sat there and stared into the past and the future she knew that it was left for her to drink of the cup which they were filling—the cup of their joy and of her bitterness.

Fear of exposure at the hand of Graydon Bansemmer's father had kept her purposely blind to the inevitable. Her woman's intuition long since had convinced her that Graydon was not like his father. She knew him to be honorable, noble, fair and worthy. Long and often had she wondered at James Bansemmer's design in permitting his son to go to the extreme point in relation with Jane. As she sat there and suffered it came to her that the man perhaps had a purpose after all—an unfathomable, selfish design which none could forestall. She knew him for all that he was. In that knowledge she felt a slight, timid sense of power. He stood for honor so far as his son was concerned. In fair play she could expose him if he sought to expose her.

But all conjectures, all fears, paled into insignificance with the one great terror—what would James Bansemmer do in the end? What would he do at the last minute to prevent the marriage of his son and this child of unknown parentage? What was to be his tribute to the final scene in the drama?

She knew that he was tightening his obnoxious coils about her all the time. Even now she could feel his hand upon her arm, could hear his sibilant whisper. Now she found herself face to face with the crisis of all these years. Her only hope lay in the thought that neither could afford the scandal of an open declaration. Bansemmer was merciless, and he was no fool.

Knowing Graydon to be the son of a scoundrel, she could under ordinary circumstances have forbidden her daughter to marry him. In this instance she could not say him nay. The venom of James Bansemmer in that event would have no measure of pity. In her heart she prayed that death might come to her aid in the destruction of James Bansemmer.

It was not until she heard Graydon coming up the stairs that the solution flashed into her brain. If Jane became the wife of this cherished son James Bansemmer's power was gone! His lips would be sealed forever. She laughed aloud in the frenzy of hope. She laughed to think what a fool she would have been to forbid the marriage. The marriage? Her salvation! Jane found her almost hysterical, trembling like a leaf. She was obliged to confess that she had heard part of their conversation below in order to account for her manner. When Jane confided to her that she had promised to marry

Graydon in September—or June—she urged her to avoid a long engagement. She could say no more than that.

Now she sat limp before the two men, a wan smile straying from one to the other, exhausted by her suppressed emotions. Suddenly, without a word, she held out her hand to Graydon. In her deepest soul she loved this manly, strong hearted young fellow. She knew, after all, he was worthy of the best woman in the land.

"You know?" cried Graydon, clasping her hand, his eyes glistening. "Jane has told you? And you—you think me worthy?"

"Yes, Graydon—you are worthy." She looked long into his eyes, searching for a trace of the unbelief that gloved in those of his father. They were fair and honest and sweet, and she smiled to herself. She wondered what his mother had been like.

"Then I may have her?" he cried. She looked up at her husband, and he nodded his head.

"Oh little girl," he murmured. It all came back to her like a flash. Her deception, her imposition, her years of stealth—and she shuddered. Her hand trembled, and her eyes grew wide with repugnance as they turned again upon Graydon Bansemmer. Both men drew back in amazement.

"Oh, no! it cannot, cannot be!" she moaned, without taking her eyes from Graydon's face. In the same instant she recovered herself and craved his pardon. "I am distressed—it is so hard

to give her up, Graydon," she panted, smiling again. The thought had come suddenly to her that James Bansemmer had a very strong purpose in letting his son marry Jane Cable. She never had ceased to believe that Bansemmer knew the parents of the child she had adopted. It had dawned upon her in the flash of that moment that the marriage might mean a great deal to this calculating father. "David, won't you leave us for a few minutes? There is something I want to say to Graydon."

David Cable hesitated for an instant and then slowly left the room, closing the door behind him. He was strangely puzzled over that momentary exposition of emotion on the part of his wife. He was a man of the world, and he knew its vices from the dregs up, but it was many days before the startling suspicion struck in to explain her un-called for display of feeling. It did not strike in until after he noticed that James Bansemmer was paying marked attention to his wife.

Left alone with Graydon, Mrs. Cable nervously hurried to the point. She was determined to satisfy herself that the son did not share her secret with his father.

"Does your father know that you want to marry Jane?" she asked.

"Of course—er—I mean he suspects, Mrs. Cable. He has teased me not a little, you know. I'm going to tell him tonight."

"He has not known Jane very long, you know."

"Long enough to admire her above all others. He has often told me that she is the finest girl he's ever met. Oh, I'm sure father will be pleased, Mrs. Cable."

"I met your father in New York, of course—years ago. I presume he has told you."

"I think not. Oh, yes; I believe he did tell me after we met you at Hookey's that night. He had never seen Mr. Cable."

"Nor Jane, I dare say."

"Oh, no! I knew Jane long before she ever laid eyes on her." The look in his eyes satisfied her over all that he knew nothing more.

"You love her enough to sacrifice anything on earth for her?" she asked suddenly.

"Yes, Mrs. Cable," he answered simply.

"You would renounce all else in the world for her sake?"

"I believe that's part of the service," he said, with a smile. "Jane is worth all of that and more. She shall be first in my heart, in my mind, for all time, if that is what you mean, Mrs. Cable. Believe me, I mean that."

"Mr. Bansemmer says that you are like your mother," she mused wistfully.

"That's why he loves me, he also says. I'm sorry I'm not like father," he said earnestly. "He's great!" She turned her face away so that he might not see the look in her eyes. "I think Jane is like"—He paused in confusion. "Like her father," he concluded. She arose abruptly and took his hand in hers.

"Go to her, Graydon," she said. "Tell her that Mr. Cable and I want you to be our son. Good night and God bless you." She preceded him to the stairway and again shook hands with him. David Cable was ascending.

"Graydon," said the latter, pausing halfway up as the other came down, "you were ready to congratulate me in advance on the prospect of becoming president of the P. L. and A. Do you know that I was once an ordinary fire-man?"

"Certainly, Mr. Cable. The rise of David Cable is known to every one."

"That's all. I just wanted to be sure. Jane was not born with a silver spoon, you know."

"And yet she is Jane Cable," said the young man proudly. Then he hurried on down to the expectant, throbbing Jane.

Frances Cable sat at her escritoire for an hour, her brain working with feverish energy. She was seeking out the right step to take in advance of James Bansemmer. Her husband sat alone in his den and smoked long after she had taken her step and retired to rest, but not to sleep. On her desk lay half a dozen invitations, two of them from the exclusive set to whose inner circles her ambitious, vigorous aspirations were forcing her. She pushed them aside and with narrowed eyes wrote to James Bansemmer—wrote the note of the diplomat who seeks to forestall.

Dear Mr. Bansemmer—Doubtless Graydon will have told you that good news before this reaches you, but Mr. Cable and I feel that we cannot permit the hour to pass without assuring you of our own happiness and of our complete approval. Will you dine with us this evening—in family—at seven-thirty. FRANCES CABLE.

David Cable read the note and sent it early the next morning by special messenger to James Bansemmer. The engagement of Jane Cable and Graydon Bansemmer was announced in the evening papers.



To be Continued

Music At the State Fair.

Weil's Band will play at the State Fair during the coming exhibition, October 3-9. This celebrated band will certainly please the visitors and it is expected that it will make a great hit at Sedalia. Two daily concerts will be given and everybody will want to hear them.